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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 ADDIS ABABA 003048

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FOR A/S FRAZER AND DAS YAMAMOTO FROM VICKI HUDDLESTON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/13/2016

TAGS: ASEC ET PGOV PHUM PREL PTER SO

SUBJECT: AN AMERICAN/ETHIOPIAN PARTNERSHIP SO CRITICAL AND SO CRITICIZED

Classified By: CHARGE VICKI HUDDLESTON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (SBU) Summary: As I prepare to turn over my responsibilities to my good friend and respected colleague, Ambassador Don Yamamoto, I urge the USG to maintain and strengthen our partnership with Ethiopia. Ethiopia is moving in the right direction -- despite the nay-sayers -- on democracy, development, and protecting the region from terrorism and radical Islam. If we fail to consolidate and support Ethiopia, we could unwittingly contribute to the break-up of the nation, and fuel a Christian - Muslim conflict in the Horn. Abraham Lincoln said of his Presidency, "I confess to not having controlled events, but to having been controlled by events." No African government can ensure to its citizens democracy, jobs and peace over the next half century without the assistance of the United States and the international community. Ethiopia is an old empire but a fragile one. Political and religious divisions could potentially tear away parts of Oromiya, Gambella, and the Somali region from the uneasy federation. Even Tigray, where the Abyssinian empire began, is at risk because the jailed CUD leaders want a unitary state that includes Eritrea, and Tigrean and Eritreans alike will resist Amahara domination.

¶2. (SBU) When Assistant Secretary Frazer called for a "partnership with Africa," she implicitly recognized that Africa looks to us not just for assistance, but for moral legitimacy that reinforces and encourages good government. Ethiopia, with its 77 million Christian and Muslims -- the second most populous country in Africa -- would seem to be the ideal partner. It is the oldest nation and the only one not to have been colonized in sub-Saharan Africa. It is the only democratic nation that can project power throughout the Horn.

It is also the remaining bulwark against the expansion of radical Islam throughout Somalia and beyond. We cannot allow a once chaotic collection of clans led by Islamist and terrorist to turn itself into an African Taliban that could again destroy our embassies and our interests. To assure that those who would create a Muslim Caliphate are not successful, we must become a full and trusted partner that can help resolve the internal political, ethnic and religious divides that threaten Ethiopia's existence and the region's stability. The recent killings of Christian and Muslims -- now on CDs being passed around -- and the burning of churches is seen by head of the Supreme Islamic Council as a

provocation by Wahhabists who are determined to upend the delicate religious balance in a country between a country considered to be "Christian" by Muslims, but which is home to over 30 million Muslims.

¶3. (SBU) We have stood steadfast with Ethiopia over a difficult year, allowing impressive progress to be made, despite the temporary loss of over \$300 million in assistance from the World Bank and the European Union. Today, with both Bank and Union aid restored, Ethiopia is being given some of the highest marks in Africa for carrying out policies that will lead to sustainable development. Ethiopia has made application for accession to the WTO and maintained a growth rate of seven percent of GDP over the last several years. If Ethiopia can meet rising expectations by providing opportunity for its people, it can overcome its internal divisions. Our resources will be needed to win that race against time. Nowhere are our dollars better spent than in reforming state institutions from Justice to Security and in educating Ethiopians to fully participate in their future. Because we built a relationship of trust with the Prime Minister and his inner circle as well as with the opposition, we were instrumental in getting Parliament to revise its rules and conduct open debates between the ruling party and the 150 opposition MPs. The ruling party continues its dialogue with all legal opposition parties, and in consultation with them is preparing to name a new National Electoral Board to prepare for elections in the spring of ¶2007. The Parliament is poised to enact anti-terrorism and media laws that meet international standards. The report of the Independent Inquiry Commission into the riots following the May 2005 elections, has been openly debated in Parliament and in the media. Despite the barrage of international

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criticism, there is no dispute about the facts. The report presented to the Parliament documented 193 deaths, accused the government of mistakes and requested follow-on investigations. The difference between the Commissioners who defected -- and now are presenting their story to our Congress -- is an argument over whether the security forces used excessive force.

¶4. (SBU) The democratic trend is positive. But the partnership will not be strengthened if we bend to demands to pass legislation that puts Ethiopia in the same category as countries on our terrorist list, or make public our private concerns about human rights and governance. We now stand a chance of being instrumental in gaining pardons for the CUD detainees, but this could be jeopardized if Ethiopia's leaders calculate that they will be seen as reacting to international pressure. Ethiopia -- as I have learned -- will not act from weakness or because of public threats or even loss of aid. Yet it will -- and has -- listened to its friends. If we stay the course -- continue the partnership, and build the trust -- not only do we stand a good chance of getting the prisoners pardons, but we will reinforce good governance, economic reform and defense against terrorism in the Horn. Ethiopia is neither -- as its critics like to claim -- a Marxist-Leninist dictatorship, nor is it a multi-party democracy that strictly adheres to open market principles. But if hubris demands that partnership be based on our standards, then we will find ourselves helping those whose principal goal is neither democracy nor development, but regime change. The policy of partnership is succeeding. Meles has listened to our advice not to attack the Islamic Courts, considered pardons for the CUD prisoners, and to put in place a democratic process. These actions have convinced the Europeans and World Bank to resume and increase their assistance. As we continue to build our partnership, we will be foremost among Ethiopia's friends and foremost among those who are committed to help Ethiopia ensure that the trend to democracy, development and stability becomes a reality. End Summary.

ONE YEAR LATER WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

15. (SBU) Our conversations with Meles and the EPRDF hierarchy have effectively encouraged Meles and the GOE to deepen their commitment to Ethiopia's democracy and development. Ethiopia has moved from meeting four out of sixteen of the Millennium Challenge Account indicators last year to meeting seven out of sixteen this year. Today 150 opposition MP's are fully participating in Parliament, compared with only a handful eighteen months ago. Opposition MPs hold the chair and deputy chair of the Accounting Committee and two deputy chairs in the other 13 standing committees. Dialogue between the ruling EPRDF party and all the opposition parties resulted in the overwhelming adoption of modified Parliamentary rules that reflect international standards and permit the opposition to question Minister and propose laws. The on-going dialogue among the ruling party and opposition has already addressed rule of law issues in the Oromia and Amhara regions and will now publicly review a new media law and capacity building at the National Electoral Board. Consultants from the US have laid out the international standards that we expect both the media and anti-terrorism laws to meet. Public financing of political parties is also under consideration. Perhaps most importantly, Prime Minister Meles is publicly committed to democracy and to eradicating poverty. He has appeared before Parliament six times in the last nine months. Opposition leaders' speeches and critiques have been televised and published in the state media. The recent EPRDF summit acknowledged the ruling party's weak performance in governance, and committed the next three years to improved governance, building democracy and development.

16. (SBU) As for those detained in connection with last November's violent unrest, our discussions with Meles led to dropping the charges against VOA reporters and 14 others and the reduction of charges. The judicial process has been open

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to the public, including to US NGO Lawyers Without Borders. The prosecution has recently argued somewhat more persuasively through ongoing witness testimony that some of the defendants called for armed uprising and protest to overthrow the government. The trial is expected to end in early January. During their year-long detention, the prisoners have had access to health care and visitors. The principal CUD leaders have allegedly continued to advocate civil disobedience, and all but three defendants have refused legal counsel. We continue to seek ways to reconcile the differences and have some hope, as Meles reiterated his commitment to pardons if the defendants are found guilty but are willing to work within the system and to express regret for their past mistakes. Untangling this web of fear, ethnic differences and political ambition will take time. It is not a one-sided problem. Some of the CUD detained leaders as well as their vocal, hard-line supporters in the Diaspora are unwilling to engage in the democratic process, whether by joining Parliament or by agreeing to disavow street action.

THE RIGHT AND WRONG WAYS TO PERSUADE THE GOE

17. (SBU) If we have the courage to strengthen our commitment to Ethiopia, we have much to gain. But if we aggressively and publicly press Meles in order to appease the Diaspora, some members of Congress and some civil society groups, we will lose Ethiopia. We will cede our influence, leaving the field to China, Russia and others who have little interest in helping to create a multi-party democracy. We will not gain the release of the CUD detainees, or even the improved governance performance we seek, because Meles will not respond if he is not treated with respect and as a full partner. Meles was willing to forego \$300 million in World Bank and European Commission assistance because he believed that they had broken their partnership with Ethiopia. The GOE, despite its friendship with us, remains unsure about

whether rebuilding its partnership with the West is worth the effort if the relationship will break down when the going gets rough. Meles has already turned to China as a more reliable partner than Europe, even though EU assistance levels have been restored. But Meles will always do what he believes to be in the country's national interest rather than accepting our demands. Today we have a strong relationship with Meles and the inner circle, but it is a wary one. It is not yet a full partnership because Washington remains hesitant over Ethiopia's human rights record, despite significant improvements over last year. As Ethiopia faces -- almost alone -- a radical Islamist challenge to its existence and the region's stability, it is time to put aside our hesitations and make Ethiopia a full partner of the US. It will help the GOE grow democracy and civil society by promoting stability, reconciling the country's numerous ethnic and separatist aspirations and assuring continuing tolerance among Christian Orthodox and Muslim faith.

SOMALIA

18. (C) Somalia's Islamic Courts (CIC), led by Sheik Hassan Dahir Aweys, according to Embassy Nairobi, "has had one consistent agenda and this is the establishment of an extremist Islamic state in Somalia" and to that end "(he) is willing to countenance significant bloodshed to achieve it." Aweys' CIC over the past six months has morphed from providing security in Mogadishu into a radical movement fueled by the militant Shabaab ("youth"). They are now in open battle with the semi-autonomous region of Puntland and attempting to subvert Somaliland. The CIC -- with support from Al Qaeda East African operatives, foreign resources and other Jihadist fighters -- is poised to attack Baidoa, the headquarters of the shaky Transitional Federal Government. If successful, the Islamists will have not just overturned a legitimate government -- set up by Somalis, the region and the international community after fourteen years of chaos -- but it will then establish itself as the radical Islamic government of southern Somalia. It will have set a precedent for using force to overturn a legitimate government. The

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newly-minted and potentially effective US Strategy for Engagement in Somalia offers the possibility of preserving the Somalia TFG and containing the CIC, but time is not on our side.

19. (C) The goal of pan-Somali nationalist Aweys is the powerful idea of "Greater Somalia" that Siad Barre thought he could create by invading Ethiopia. This invasion prolonged the bloody DERG regime, left thousands homeless and dead and was only resolved in Ethiopia's favor by the Soviet and Cuban troops and equipment. If successful in defeating the TFG at Baidoa, Aweys' forces will gain momentum; already daily flights of men and equipment are pouring into Mogadishu for an attack on Puntland and Somaliland in the expectation that this will unite Somalia. At the same time, insurgents from Oromiya (the OLF) and the Ogaden (the ONLF), backed by Eritrea, will move east into Ethiopia. The ONLF intends to break off Ethiopia's Somali region, uniting it with a Greater Somali state. The OLF will either ensure that there is regime change in Addis Ababa or separate Oromiya from Ethiopia. In the end, Ethiopia's enemies -- most notably Eritrea -- would be successful in breaking up Ethiopia and ousting Meles. To the south, Kenya's northern provinces with substantial Somali populations would be laid open to subversion and eventual partition. Even CIC-friendly Djibouti would come under pressure to exchange its moderate Islam for a more radical posture. Admittedly, the above is the worse case scenario. Undoubtedly, the CIC will meet greater resistance as it attempts to govern different clans within Somalia and conquer territories of neighboring states. But even a best case scenario, should the CIC win at Baidoa, gives the CIC and through it Al Qaeda a country of 10 million people from whence it can attack moderate Muslim and

Christian countries, as well as Western interests, in Africa.

There should be no doubt about this, given that Somalia harbors the terrorists who blew up our embassies in Nairobi and Dar Es Salaam.

A PLAN OF ACTION FOR ETHIOPIA

¶10. (SBU) What can be done in Somalia? Ethiopia is already on the front lines. Although vilified and clearly out-gunned by CIC propaganda, the GOE will not back down in defending its national security. Meles told me that Ethiopia will defend Baidoa to the end. If Ethiopia is successful -- and I believe it will be -- then the CIC momentum will be broken. An opportunity will arise to stop Somalia from being devoured by the radical Islam. If we - and ideally our European allies - seize the opportunity, we can begin to stabilize Somalia under the TFG by providing advice, information and support to Ethiopia. Most effective for Ethiopia would be to have implicit approval of its support to the TFG through a UNSC resolution lifting the arms embargo on the TFG and authorizing the Ugandan IGASOM. If the battle for Baidoa -- or other conflict between anti-CIC forces and the CIC -- has successfully taken place, IGASOM will still be necessary to stabilize southern Somalia. At the same time, we and our allies and the region must continue to strengthen governance and development projects in all of Somalia while encouraging the TFG to incorporate moderate elements of the CIC, thereby marginalizing the radicals.

¶11. (SBU) At the same time, we will continue to press Ethiopia to improve governance and human rights while expanding opportunities for effective engagement of civil society and opposition parties. I have met with Meles biweekly on average and I have never had a meeting with him in which I did not raise the issues of governance and human rights. I have met with him numerous times to review strategies for resolution of the Eritrea/Ethiopian border, Somalia and internal governance, and never failed to suggest solutions for the CUD detainees. As a result, I have been able to visit the prisoners three times and am working with concerned Ethiopians and Ethiopian-Americans on a process that may lead to pardons. The point here is that Meles -- and the inner circle -- listen to our advice if it is given in private and as a partner. Therefore I would suggest that

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we lay out a series of bench marks which can be used by Washington to gauge Ethiopia's progress, as follows:

- Parliament passes a media law and anti-terrorism laws that meet international standards;
- The opposition is consulted on the appointment of a new, neutral National Electoral Board.
- Parliament approves public financing for political parties;
- GOE engages successfully with donors on the governance matrix;
- The Government pursues the investigations recommended by the Independent Inquiry Commission;
- Offices of legal opposition parties that have not been reopened are opened;
- All legal parties are permitted to participate in the Spring elections;
- The judicial process is completed and a verdict determined for all CUD detainees;
- If found guilty, CUD detainees who agree not to engage in illegal activities or civil disobedience are pardoned;
- Preparations for local elections are done in consultation with the opposition; and
- Local elections are successfully held.

¶12. (SBU) The almost rosy scenario on Somalia has a much better chance of success if we are ready to cement a full partnership with Ethiopia, because it is only Ethiopia that now blocks a radical Islamist state from rising in the Horn of Africa. If we fail to act, we will be the losers. But if

we are working with the government and the opposition to achieve the benchmarks laid out above, Ethiopians will have a real chance of a prosperous and democratic future. The American people care about Africa. They want to see improved human rights and more freedom for Africa's citizens. They also recognize that this can not be achieved if African states are warring against each other or being overrun by extremist forces financed and supported from abroad. When the war comes - as it will -- we can best help Ethiopian democracy if we are a firm and reliable partner. It is time to stop hating Ethiopia -- the trend is in the right direction and the danger is great.

HUDDLESTON